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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Beautiful pink cherry plums hang on the tree.
Photos Cynthia Brian

harvests of corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, peaches, pears, apples, plums, prunes, eggplants, zucchini, berries, peppers, and other nutritious treats that will grace our dining tables. Although this summer I won't be hosting any barbecue buffets, I still enjoy picking fresh fruit in my orchard and eating my home-grown vegetables. Pink cherry plums are plump and especially delicious this year as are the deep dark purple prunes. Prunes and plums come from the same genus, *Prunus*, yet they are not identical. Plums are usually round, red or yellow, whereas prunes are oval-shaped and purple, almost blackish with a pit that dislodges easily. Plums and prunes are also related to cherries, peaches and almonds, all in the family *Prunus*. This season my cherry plums have a distinct flavor of peaches. My peaches aren't ripe, but they are planted close to the plums. Every year the taste varies. Because cherry plums are the size of cherries and quite crunchy when not over-ripe, I freeze a few and eat them like a popsicle. Sometimes I add the frozen plum to my beverage for an enlivening alternative to ice. I plan on dehydrating some of the prunes or drying them for future use.

My girlfriend, Nora, is a huge fan of black currants, also known as cassis. Over 30 years ago her dad gave her a cutting from their family currant shrub to plant in her garden. Harvesting the currants brings a sweet memory of the times she spent with her doctor dad. This year's crop was profuse. She'll freeze a few cartons of these tasty, complex, and medicinally useful fruit for her family's winter enjoyment. My black currant flowers were prolific, yet my berries were disappointing. A handy tool for harvesting is a Scandinavian berry picker that eliminates having to pluck single berries one by one.

It wouldn't be summer without the sweet and savory ingredients of fresh-picked corn, cucumbers, and heirloom tomatoes. If you are not growing any, farmers' markets have bushels ready to buy. I soak the ears of corn with the husk on in a bucket of water for an hour, then, pull back part of the husks, lather with a basil-garlic butter, and steam them on the barbecue. Yummy! My mother's tomato salad has been a family tradition for ages. Slice heirloom tomatoes, red onions and cucumbers. Add chopped garlic and red, orange, or green bell peppers. Dress with olive oil, wine vinegar, and balsamic. Season to taste. Voila! A beautiful and scrumptious summer salad.

Finally, don't forget to cut a few stems of "pretties" to add to a vase. Right now, the *Crocodylia* or firecracker plant is in full bloom and makes a fantastic cut flower. Leave several in the garden for the hovering hummingbirds. Don't forget to refill fountains so that our bird friends can have a refreshing drink or bath.

Fire season is ramping up and with the recent winds, wildfires could easily ignite. Make sure to cut any tall grass or weeds, trim low hanging branches, clean gutters, and remove debris from around your property. GardenComm: Garden Communicators International just notified me that I won the 2020 Media Awards Silver Medal of Achievement for a Journalism Newspaper Article, presented by out of 160 entries for my Lamorinda Weekly article, "Scary, scary night." I am honored for this major award and encourage you to have another look at that winning entry because it will help you prepare your landscaping for fire resistance.

With this Covid-19 pandemic, the smoke from wildfires has the potential to be extra dangerous or deadly. Read "Scary, scary night" at www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1318/Digging-Deep-with-Goddess-Gardener-Cynthia-Brian-Scary-scary-night.html

Read about the award here:

www.sbwire.com/press-releases/cynthia-brian-receives-silver-medal-of-achievement-in-the-national-2020-gardencomm-media-awards-1296930.htm#

May you enjoy a sweet and savory summer of social distancing and wearing masks.

Be healthy, hopeful, and positive. Steep thyself in a bowl of summer. I am!

Happy gardening. Happy growing.

"Steep thyself in a bowl of summer." - Virgil

Summer! Just saying the word puts a smile on my face.

Since I was a little girl, the months of July and August were times of great joy, working as a laborer picking or cutting apricots, peaches, and pears in neighbors' orchards or fruit shed to earn money for college during the day, followed by unwinding with evening baseball games in the fields. Sundays were spent with cousins and relatives swimming in the pool at my grandparents' vineyard. Our parents would prepare a feast for dinner after harvesting whatever vegetables were ready in the garden while the kids braved the thorny brambles to find the juiciest berries for dessert. In the station wagon on the way back to our ranch, we'd fall blissfully asleep, our hearts filled with happy memories and our bellies pleasantly satiated, except, of course, for my Dad, the driver.

Summer boasts a sweet and savory story with



Shrub filled with black currant berries.



Cynthia's mom's Italian traditional tomato summer salad grown in the garden.



Crocosmia, the firecracker plant is a hummingbird magnet and great for cutting.



Purple prunes hanging from the branch.



Corn stalks growing.



Summer smiles with Cynthia Brian.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is available for hire to help you prepare for your spring garden. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia is a New York Times best-selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach,

as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!r 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyler Radio Broadcast at www.StarStyleRadio.com. Buy copies of her best-selling books, including, Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Cynthia is available for virtual writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com
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